

IN THE AGE OF SAMIZDAT

Articles and speeches from different years

ISOLATION OR Rapprochement? *(National question in the USSR)*

Of all the burning problems that have accumulated in our life, the issue of relations between nations seems to be the most painful one. On no other basis do you encounter such outbursts of resentment, anger and pain - neither in connection with material inequality, nor with spiritual lack of freedom, nor with oppression of religion. Here are two examples.

More than once already - and not only to me - I have heard the cry in our Central Asian cities: "Here the Chinese will come, they will show you!" This is usually said by not completely uncivilized people who cannot but know what the arrival of the Chinese will mean for them, at least following the example of the Kirghiz, who still happily got off - robbed and expelled from China. (For Tibetans, for example, the radio reported that they were subjected to mass castration.) They know - and nevertheless they speak. Apparently, the intensity of feelings, suppressing even the instinct of self-preservation, here is of the same level as in Western Ukraine in 1941, when the OUN units attacked the retreating Soviet troops, and the OUN leadership concluded an agreement with the Germans, although, following the example of Poland, it could not fail to foresee that, what happened after 1.5 months - the arrest of the entire leadership and the defeat of most of the detachments.

The same impression remains if we compare how Samizdat treats the national question and other seemingly no less acute problems, be it the situation of prisoners in camps or the imprisonment of healthy people in psychiatric hospitals. Many have already paid attention to the fact that in the overwhelming number of works of Samizdat authors voluntarily obey certain prohibitions, certain paths are closed for them: to incite anger, envy of those living better, to call for violence. Apparently, some of the lessons of the past have been learned so deeply that they have already become stable norms of thinking. On the basis of the national question, all such prohibitions disappear. Here you can find indignant descriptions that one nation lives better than another or, albeit worse, still gets more than it worked out. Samizdat projects for resolving the national question usually include demands for various forced resettlements, transparent hints, which, however, could have been done more harshly. It gives the impression that, entering this area, on the contrary, they forget everything that has been taught by the past.

The painfulness and acuteness of relations between nations is not an exclusive feature of our Soviet life - it is now visible all over the world. And we can try to understand our problems, only realizing them as a refraction on our soil of laws common to all mankind.

Quite unexpectedly, the 20th century turned out to be a century of unheard-of exacerbated nationalism. In the last century, the common belief was that the national problem is out of date, that small nations will gradually dissolve into large nations, the

differences between large nations will gradually smooth out and in the near future humanity will merge into a global unity, perhaps with a single language. The reality turned out to be just the opposite. Countries that have lived in the national world for centuries are caught up in ethnic strife. Variations of nationalism have emerged that were previously unknown, such as Breton, Walloon or Welsh. National enmity has reached a previously unheard-of degree of mutual anger, has led to the extermination of entire nations, for example, as a result of the war in Nigeria.

This is not the only miscalculation in the forecasts of the 19th century, not the only case when the then dominant ideology turned out to be directly opposite to the future that this century was preparing. Then it seemed that a clear way of building a life was opening up before humanity, more and more subordinate to the principles of humanity, respect for the rights of the individual, and democracy. It seemed that Russia was blocking the path of progress precisely because its internal life was not liberal and democratic enough. Dostoevsky alone, it seems, had a presentiment that the fate of the world would be completely different.

The historical role of the 20th century affected precisely in the fact that huge parts of mankind fell under the ideology of maximum suppression of the individual. Socialism, which had been expressed as a doctrine for centuries, began to materialize in the form of socialist states. This process from the beginning of the XX century. walked with stops, but almost only monotonically expanding, and there is no reason to believe that it was over. In light of this main trend of the XX century. and one should try to understand the national question both throughout the world and in our country.

At the beginning of the XX century. the picture of the world was determined by the role played in it by the "great powers" - the strongest states, led by peoples inspired by the belief in the special role that they are called to play in the world. In this situation, socialist currents could choose between two strategies: using the aspirations of great nations, their faith in their mission, or suppressing these aspirations. Both strategies have been tried. Experience has shown that if the use of national feelings can be useful for strengthening the stability of an already established socialist state (especially during a period of severe crisis, war), then for seizing power, for drawing new peoples into the socialist ideology, it is incomparably more effective to inflate anti-national ideology. especially directed against large nations and accompanied by some encouragement of patriotism of small nationalities. This strategy became the main weapon of the socialist currents of the Marxist direction, the basis of the ideology of which was internationalism, the denial and destruction of patriotism, the doctrine of the division of the nation into two hostile cultures. This worldview, hostile to the spirit of states with a strongly expressed national and especially religious idea, contributed to their destruction, and itself became stronger during periods of crises in these states. Whatever is the cause and what is the effect, we are clearly dealing with two manifestations of the same process. denial and destruction of patriotism, the doctrine of the division of the nation into two hostile cultures. This worldview, hostile to the spirit of states with a strongly expressed national and especially religious idea, contributed to their destruction, and itself became stronger during periods of crises in these

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First, the victim of this process fell the Russian Kingdom, which stood on an Orthodox basis, then Austria-Hungary, which still preserved the thousand-year tradition of the sacred Roman Empire. A quarter of a century later, it was Germany's turn as a unified German state. But even among its victors, the British Empire soon ceased to exist.

All these political catastrophes were accompanied by violent ideological attacks on those peoples who played a leading role in these countries, against their claims to a special historical mission. For example, in post-war (after World War II) Germany, a whole literature set itself the goal of proving to the German people their sinfulness, indelible guilt before all of humanity. Repentance both at the level of the individual and the people is one of the most uplifting movements of the soul, and, of course, the Germans have something to repent of. But repentance loses its meaning, if there is no such lofty goal for the sake of which purification is performed, it then turns into an act of spiritual suicide. And we Russians are so familiar with this theme of the "accursed past" that deprives people of its history!

And, finally, in the United States, such a fierce campaign against the Vietnam War was unlikely to have been caused by an increase in moral sensitivity, a greater understanding of one's responsibility. Otherwise, it is not clear why, for example, the destruction of an entire people, For in Nigeria, accompanied by a greater number of victims than the entire war in Vietnam, passed completely unnoticed. Yes, some leaders of the anti-war movement openly admitted that it was not a matter of war. "End the Vietnam War, and we will come up with new demands," said one of them. It seems that the true goal of this movement was America's claim to a special role in the world, the feeling of a great nation that has not yet disappeared from the Americans.

The destruction of great empires at all times proceeded in parallel with the exacerbation of the national feeling of individual nations included in them, the isolation of ethnic groups, their desire to stand out as independent nations. Again, there is no single answer here - what was the effect and what was the cause. National separatism acted as a force destroying the old empire and was stimulated by the emptiness that was created in the souls by the destruction of the feeling of general imperial unity, a high unifying goal. This parallelism is clearly visible in the XX century, where both tendencies are increasingly manifested: to the destruction of great states led by a national idea, and the fragmentation of humanity into ever smaller national units.

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It seems to me that, proceeding from this point of view, there is hope to understand why it is in our country that the national question is especially painful. The reason is that the present relations of nationalities are the result of a contradictory historical process. On the one hand, the isolation of various nations, the striving for the greatest national independence proceeded in parallel with the subordination of all life to socialist ideology. These were such closely intertwined processes that in many cases their manifestations are difficult to distinguish. For example, when the tendencies towards the isolation of non-Russian nations deliberately developed as a counterbalance to Russian patriotism, which was then considered the main danger. But on the other hand, these national aspirations soon collided with deep,

Thus, the national life of many peoples is now a victim of precisely that force - socialist ideology - with the assistance and under the strong influence of which they have not so long ago developed a system of views of intolerant, radical nationalism. This ideology has left such a strong mark on the national worldview, penetrated so deeply into it and mixed with it that it is extremely difficult for those who proceed from national positions to realize that it is precisely this ideology that is the main cause of their misfortunes.

On this basis, that, as it seems to me, is a fundamentally incorrect concept arises, which underlies almost all statements on the national question in our country known to me (I mean, of course, only literature free from censorship). This concept is very simple: all the problems of the national life of non-Russian peoples are ultimately reduced to the suppression of these peoples by the Russians, to the desire to russify them. The areas inhabited by these peoples are Russian colonies. The peoples have a clear goal: liberation from Russian colonial rule.

The seductiveness of this point of view is understandable. It introduces a complex problem within the framework of some simple and universally accepted views. Everyone now agrees that colonialism is a disgrace of the 20th century and that colonies should become independent as soon as possible. Therefore, to obtain "colony status" in the eyes of the world means now to secure for oneself the automatic support of colossal forces. And that means offering your people a very clear, simple way. But solutions to complex problems are never primitively simple. We must carefully check whether the main thesis of this concept is true - that the non-Russian peoples of the USSR are in colonial subordination to the Russian people - not only in order to know the truth, but because a conclusion based on an incorrect premise cannot be reliable for those peoples to whom it is offered.

The arguments that usually justify the dependent, colonial position of the non-Russian peoples of the USSR, at first glance, make an absolutely convincing impression. The most common are the following.

- 1) Great values are pumped out of the territory inhabited by non-Russian peoples, at the expense of which the part of the USSR inhabited by Russians is enriched.

2) The density of the indigenous population is decreasing, it is thinning out. Two reasons are indicated: the deportation of the indigenous population (in the past) and the resettlement of a large number of Russians (at the present time). Russians arrive as workers at new industrial enterprises, the creation of which is often not economically justified, and is not necessary for the development of this area.

3) National culture is suppressed. The manifestation of bright national trends in art is prohibited and persecuted. A certain line in history is being forcibly drawn, belittling the national identity of the people. Historical relics are not protected, they are destroyed, the ancient cities and streets are given new names that are not related to the history of the people.

4) National religion is suppressed.

5) The national language is increasingly being ousted by Russian.

But these arguments take on a different meaning if we ask: do they also apply to the Russian people? Let's sort them out in order.

1) In some works on the national theme, attention is drawn to the fact that the living standard of the Russian people is lower than that of many other peoples: Georgian, Armenian, Ukrainian, Latvian or Estonian.

Sometimes it is even seen as a sign of a special colonialism: Russian-style colonialism. Is this not an attempt to get around the contradiction by introducing a new term? It seems obvious that this is a general phenomenon: a huge part of the values produced by all peoples does not return to them. And it's easy to guess where they are going: to maintain a gigantic military machine and civil bureaucracy, to work in space, to help Asian, African and Latin American revolutionary movements, and most of all - to compensate for economic inefficiencies.

2) It is unlikely that anyone will argue that in the past - for example, during the period of collectivization - the Russian people suffered less from deportation than other peoples. With regard to modernity, attention is drawn here to a completely general reason - disproportionate development of the economy, not justified by the interests of any people. This reason also hurls the masses, both Russians and non-Russians, tearing them away from their national tasks. And if in the documents written by Ukrainians you come across complaints about the resettlement of Russians to Ukraine, then, for example, Estonians and Latvians complain that more and more not only Russians, but also Ukrainians are moving to them.

3) The suppression of Russian national culture began when any manifestation of the national identity of other peoples was still actively supported. And now, in many samizdat articles on the national question, Russians are accused of "great-power chauvinism." But this term was launched more than half a century ago and practically

meant a call for the persecution of any manifestation of Russian national consciousness.

Even before the state took it upon itself, since the last century, the omnipotent liberal public opinion declared Russian patriotism to be reactionary, for Russians - shameful, for everyone - dangerous.

And so to this day, the Russian national consciousness lives under the vigilant hostile supervision, like a criminal exiled under the supervision of the police. Here is one of the last harsh warnings. A group of anonymous authors published several related articles, almost a collection, in No. 97 of the Bulletin of the Russian Christian Student Movement. The word that constitutes (albeit in a Latin translation) the title of the first article, that which in other articles immediately captivates the reader, is a call to Russia to repentance. But among all the sins of Russia, what was the most terrible sin that the authors saw? It turns out that this is the belief that Russia has a historical mission, that it also brings its own new word to the world, or, as the authors say, "Russian messianism." They demand repentance from the Russians for this sin, indicating this even as the main goal of Russia in the future. To set a goal to change the consciousness of the people so that they do not dare to think that their life has a purpose! To what other people were they given such teachings?

Several generations of Russians were brought up on such an interpretation of Russian history, which could lead to only one desire - to try to forget that we had any past at all. Russia was both the "gendarme of Europe" and the "prison of peoples", its history was "in the fact that it was continuously beaten", our history was designated by one term: "the accursed past."

It is unlikely that the broom of renaming, which cleaned everything that connects us with our history, walked over another people more cruelly than over the Russian. I suggest anyone have a simple experience: get on a bus going through the center of Moscow and listen to the bus stops being announced by the driver. Then it will be striking that streets that have retained their old, primordial names have already become rare exceptions - as if some kind of brush wiped off all the signs that could remind that the Russian people had a history.

4) The same can be said about the suppression of religion. Here the Russian Orthodox Church took the first blow, when Islam, for example, was still met with a very respectful attitude. And in this first onslaught, a large role was assigned precisely to the use of the religious policy of other nations: for example, the creation of an independent, autocephalous Georgian Church or attempts to create such a Church in Ukraine.

And only with the last, fifth of the above arguments, one must agree: all this activity is carried out mainly in Russian, as in the state language of the USSR. But what do the Russians gain from this?

We can point out other painful phenomena in our national life - first of all, this is the catastrophic destruction of the village, which has always been the basis of nationality. But from this, the Russians suffered no less than other peoples.

It seems to me that the theory of "Russian colonialism" is not only unfair in relation to the Russian people, it is actually incorrect, and thus harmful to other peoples, because it prevents them from correctly understanding their national life. In fact, the main features of the national life of the USSR are a direct consequence of the domination of our socialist ideology. This ideology is hostile to every nation, as it is hostile to every single human person. It can temporarily take advantage of the aspirations of certain peoples, but its fundamental tendency is the maximum destruction of all nations. Russians suffer from this no less than others, they were the first to take the blow of this force.

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If we accept this point of view on how the current state of nations has developed, then the practical attitude to contemporary problems must also be changed accordingly. If it is impossible to shift the blame to the current situation on one people, then we must admit that to some extent everyone shares it. This point of view seems to me to be fruitful, since it frees thought from the belief in subjection to external reasons, in which we, as a rule, do not have power, and directs it to the reasons hidden within us, which are thereby more subordinate to us. Such a dilemma also confronts the individual: are the main contours of his fate determined by external factors - material reasons, social environment, etc. - or are they mainly internal. After all, this is the question of free will. He also stands before the nation. But here, If we recognize the prevailing role of internal reasons, if we recognize that the fate of a people is more determined by their contemporary actions, by their own worldview, than by external factors, then we must also draw the conclusion that breaking with the Russian people cannot change these internal reasons. In other words, having abandoned the correctness of the concept of "colonization", the concept of "decolonization" must be revised again. Here I mean only that it is necessary to free oneself from a certain cliché of thought, from the unverifiable, unjustified conviction that a break with the Russians and the creation of its own state for each nation will provide an automatic solution to all its problems. It seems to me that there is a deep analogy here with the position of those figures of Russian culture, who succumbed to the temptation of such an unusual way out for us recently - emigration. In both cases, the basis is the hope to "escape from one's shadow" - by external means to solve essentially internal problems.

We all created the prerequisites for the problems that are now facing us: Russian nihilists, Ukrainian Borotbists, Latvian riflemen, and many others have worked here. How can one hope to unravel this jointly knot separately?

Our fathers all together declared Russia a "prison of peoples", adding to it the words of the anthem that inspired them "... we will destroy to the ground, and then ..." The destruction of the "prison of peoples" was a success, but then "then ..." - then, for example, a group of Estonian nationalists addresses a letter to the UN, assuring that

now there is a danger to the very existence of the Estonian people. And at the same time calling for the end of all ties with the peoples of the USSR, the eviction of Russians and Ukrainians from Estonia, and the deployment of UN troops. So has history taught us little, that this is not the height of statesmanship - to throw away centuries-old ties like unnecessary rubbish, that we must start not with "destroying to the ground," but with changing and improving?

The peoples of our country are welded together by a common history. She gave us the only experience in the whole world that no other people have. Strange as it may sound, but in many respects we are now immeasurably farther on the historical path than many peoples that we are used to only "catching up". The phase in which Western Europe and the United States are now is surprisingly reminiscent of the heyday of "nihilism" in our country, that is, our history of a century ago. This experience we have gained through suffering imposes on us moral obligations. We are now able to see and tell the world what no one else is capable of. In this I see the historical mission of those peoples who inhabited Russia, and now the Soviet Union. They can point out the way out of the labyrinth in which mankind is now lost. And this is the only way how any of our peoples can influence the fate of mankind, and thus their own fate. Of course, it is an internal matter, a matter of the conscience of each nation to decide whether to take on this mission. Here it is impossible to judge, condemn for what decision was made. But it seems to me that it would not be tactless interference to express my point of view on this issue, which is vitally important for all of us.

Why, in fact, should it be considered that different peoples cannot voluntarily and for the common good live within the limits of one state? Then it is permissible to think - can there be different personalities? Of course, the emergence of ever smaller states is a trend of recent decades, but it does not follow from this that it is correct. Small and very tiny states, which have appeared more and more recently, are too weak - in all respects they are doomed to depend on the larger ones and become their hosts. They can become a force only by acting together, subordinating their individuality to the community, always choosing from all the exits the one that will not cause anyone's objection, that is, the most trivial. This is how the "ochlocracy of nations" emerges, the picture of which we see in the UN. But the process is still at the very beginning. Now there are about 2000 nations and about 150 states in the world. If the trend towards the formation of single-national states continues, the existing states will have to be further fragmented by more than tenfold. But the creation of these states-grains of sand does not provide salvation from the same troubles: we see that they continue to suffer from the same ulcer of interethnic and intertribal strife. And this path is proposed as ideal in many samizdat works on the national question. One of them even expresses an interesting idea that any village may well become a state. It is worth trying to think over this proposal seriously and imagine such a "state": where will it get the simplest agricultural machines or electric lighting, where will it get teachers and doctors? And why not follow the whole of humanity, breaking into villages, this successful example? It is worth imagining this and it becomes clear what the author of the project is willing to sacrifice for the sake of his idea of general isolation.

Nothing indicates the need for fragmentation of states into national atoms! On the contrary, cooperation between different peoples gives rise to a culture of a qualitatively higher quality than one of them could create. The culture of the largest of the nations is acquiring a new dimension, which it would not have had otherwise. And geniuses belonging to small nations reach universal human significance, which they could hardly have had if they had not been involved in a more powerful kindred culture - like the Scotsman Walter Scott in general English. But the most striking example belongs precisely to our culture - I mean, of course, Gogol. No matter how grandiose his genius is, I think that he would not have been able to reveal himself in such depth, to reach the very peak of human capabilities, if he had not been enriched by Russian culture. And his influence on humanity would be incomparably weaker,

This trend can be seen in Shevchenko's views, as evidenced by his Russian prose, his desire to be a Russian writer as well.

It seems to me that this path is not closed for the peoples of our country, but it is not easy to find it now, this requires a change in the usual points of view, and efforts, and goodwill. It would be a great pity if they understood me in such a way that, in my opinion, these efforts should be expected only from non-Russian peoples. It is the Russians who must turn themselves around in many ways.

I do not think that Russians are guilty of the national arrogance that exists in the attitude of Western Europeans towards their eastern neighbors, and even more so towards non-European peoples. Russians easily mix with other peoples and often tend to value their culture even too low.

The rapture of strength, a vice of every great nation, is by no means alien to Russians. If the armies of a large country attack a small neighbor and if they get away with it safely, then the overwhelming majority of the population of a large country feels pride and satisfaction at the same time - alas, it must be admitted that this has been the psychology of many nations for many centuries and Russians in this regard are no exception. But we cannot afford this if we want to keep at least a shadow of hope for living in the same state with our current neighbors! And so it looks like a strange provocation when the Veche magazine begins its activities with a description of Skobelev's Central Asian exploits, as if the most important wars in our history were those in which other peoples were subdued.

But there is also a typically Russian vice in our attitude towards other peoples. This is the inability to see the border separating us from other nations, the lack of inner conviction in their right to exist precisely in their originality. How often have I heard that Russians, with some naive bewilderment, tried to understand why Ukrainians, Belarusians or Lithuanians do not want to learn Russian well and turn into real Russians. This is the root of the teasing of the Ukrainian language, tactless inventions like "self-operative to the point of frowning," in the unwillingness to recognize Ukrainians as a separate nation and bewilderment - why do these "Russians" distort our language so strangely?

Maybe this comes from an inverted, falsely understood sense of equality - after all, we consider all these people to be equal to ourselves, immediately (although without their demand) we write them down as Russians. But it is easy to understand what horror and indignation this causes in others, especially small nations, who see an immense mass approaching them, ready to dissolve them in themselves without a trace.

Most of the animals capable of killing their own kind have been provided by nature with inhibitory mechanisms that make such killing impossible for them: a wolf cannot rip the neck of a wolf defeated in a fight, a raven can peck out the eye of another crow. Neither people nor nations are equipped with such braking mechanisms. They can only develop them in the process of spiritual development. This is the goal of the Russian people. We can count on the sympathy or at least non-hostile attitude of our neighbors only if we see, for example, Estonians are not just people in all respects equal to us, but we will feel how much richer our life is from the fact that this small courageous people lives next to us. , ready to bear any sacrifices, but not to give up his national identity.

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Is the picture I was trying to portray possible here? I really want to hope that it is possible, but honestly I must say - that it will come true, I am not sure. Too much is sore here and too little time, perhaps, left to correct what was done. And perhaps the national question is the most painful because it is the most difficult - after all, it consists in learning how such complexly organized individuals, such as nations, can live together without compromising their individuality. And maybe we need to look for other, much less obvious ways of solving it.

But I am sure of one thing - it cannot be solved without abandoning ingrained cliches, from "short thoughts," as Dostoevsky said. And it cannot be solved on the basis of hatred, mutual reproaches. It is necessary to get off this soil, and for this it is necessary to try to reorient the attitudes that have developed for decades, and sometimes centuries, to turn the forces of repulsion into forces of convergence. This is not only necessary in order to try to preserve ties between the peoples of our country, in this direction everyone who is responsible for the fate of their people should make their efforts - regardless of any look at its future.

Some closeness in views, the ability to understand each other are needed not only in order to live together in one state, but even in order to disperse.

V. Maklakov once expressed an interesting idea. Nationalists, he says, usually demand a plebiscite, believing that if the majority of the population in their area is in favor of secession, they should be granted independence. That is, they believe that the issue can be resolved by the will of the majority of votes in their area, while in the whole state they are in the minority. Conversely, the will of their - the minority nationwide - should be decisive, while the minority of the inhabitants of their area, who do not want to secede, should submit to the majority.

Of course, in the life of nations, a moment may come when all spiritual connection is lost and cohabitation within the framework of one state will only increase mutual anger. But Maklakov's reasoning seems to me interesting as a paradox, proving by reducing it to the absurd that no plebiscite (and even the introduction of UN troops) can solve the delicate and organic issues of the life of nations. Whatever the solution, the only healthy path to it is the rapprochement of peoples. The alternative to it is only the path of strength, in which every decision turns out to be only temporary, leading only to the next, more serious crisis.

Hopefully, there is indeed real reason for this, that in many respects the lessons of the past have not been in vain for our peoples. By our experience we are protected from many temptations, but not all. In an era of trouble, class hatred will probably no longer be the match that will set our house on fire. But the national one may well. By the tremors that are heard now, one can judge what a destructive force it can become when it breaks out. It is naive to think that someone will be able to introduce this element into the framework that is desirable for him - the forces of anger and violence obey their own laws and always devour those who unleashed them.

Who can calculate which peoples will survive another cataclysm, perhaps more terrible than everything that has happened so far?

This is the last reason for the extreme degree of acuteness that the national question has - it can become a question of the existence of our peoples.

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